

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
U.S. EMBASSY BRATISLAVA, PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Funding Opportunity Title: U.S. Embassy Bratislava PAS, AEIF 2024
Funding Opportunity Number: PAS-SVK-FY2024-02
CFDA Number – Name: 19.022 – Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs
Appropriation Overseas Grants
Deadlines for Applications: February 15, 2024

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Embassy Bratislava Public Affairs Section (PAS) announces an open competition for past participants (“alumni”) of U.S. government-funded and U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs to submit applications to the 2024 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF 2024). We seek proposals from teams of at least two alumni that meet all program eligibility requirements below. Exchange alumni interested in participating in AEIF 2024 should submit proposals to Bratislava_GrantsSlovakia@state.gov by February 15, 2024.

• **Program Objectives:**

AEIF provides alumni of U.S. government-sponsored and facilitated exchange programs with funding to expand on skills gained during their exchange experience to design and implement innovative solutions to global challenges facing their community. Since its inception in 2011, AEIF has funded nearly 500 alumni-led projects around the world through a competitive global competition.

The U.S. Embassy in Bratislava will accept public service projects proposed and managed by teams of at least two (2) alumni that support themes such as:

- Combating disinformation;
- Support for the Ukrainian community in Slovakia, inclusion of marginalized groups/minorities;
- Reforming existing/establishing new alumni associations and networks;
- Youth engagement and combating brain drain.

Proposals must address at least one of the program objectives. Proposals that do not address the theme as outlined in the program objectives will be deemed ineligible. All project activities must take place outside of the United States and its territories.

FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Announcement posted: November 29, 2023

Closing date for applications: February 15, 2024

Length of performance period: 12 months

Award amounts: awards may range from a minimum of \$5,000 to a maximum of \$35,000

Type of Funding: Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act.

Anticipated program start date: September 2024

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Funding Instrument Type: Fixed Amount Award (FAA)

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs should be completed in 12 months or less.

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants:

The following individuals are eligible to apply:

- Applicants must be alumni of a U.S. government-funded or sponsored exchange program or a U.S. government-sponsored exchange program (<https://j1visa.state.gov/>).
- Projects teams must include teams of at least two (2) alumni.
- Alumni who are U.S. citizens may not submit proposals, but U.S. citizen alumni may participate as team members in a project.
- Alumni teams may be comprised of alumni from different exchange programs and different countries.
- Applications must be submitted by exchange alumni or alumni associations of USG exchange alumni. No other organizations are eligible to apply. Exchange alumni can partner with not-for-profit or non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and academic institutions to implement project activities. The grant can be issued to the individual alumni or the partner organization.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Inclusion of cost share is not a requirement of this opportunity.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Address to Request Application Package

Application and budget forms required below are available at [Public Affairs Section Grant Opportunities - U.S. Embassy in Slovakia \(usembassy.gov\)](http://PublicAffairsSectionGrantOpportunities-U.S.EmbassyinSlovakia.usembassy.gov)

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

Applications and budgets must be submitted using the official AEIF 2024 application and budget forms.

Please follow all instructions below carefully. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

Content of Application

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity;
- The proposal addresses all questions in the official AEIF 2023 application form;
- All documents are in English;
- The budget is in U.S. dollars and is submitted using the designated AEIF 2024 budget form;
- All pages are numbered.

The following documents and information are **required**:

1. Mandatory application forms

- SF-424 (Application for Federal Assistance – organizations) or SF-424-I (Application for Federal Assistance --individuals)
- SF424A (Budget Information for Non-Construction programs)
- SF424B (Assurances for Non-Construction programs) (*note: the SF-424B is only required for individuals and for organizations not registered in SAM.gov*)

2. 2024 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund Proposal Form

1. **About your Project:** Please provide information on the title of your project, the requested budget total, and the primary location of the project. Projects need to take place outside of the U.S. or its territories.

2. **Project Team Information:** At least two exchange alumni team members are required for a project to be considered for funding. Applications need to provide the name and contact information, describe the role each team member will have in the project, and their experience, qualifications, and ability to carry out that role. Applicants need to indicate what proportion of the team member's time will be used in support of the project.
 3. **Problem Statement:** A short narrative which outlines the proposed project, including challenge/s to be addressed, project objectives, and anticipated impact.
 4. **Project Goals and Objectives:** The goal/s of the proposed project need to describe what the project is intended to achieve and include the objectives which support the goal/s. Objectives should be specific, measurable, and realistically achievable in a set time frame.
 5. **Project Methods, Design, and Timeline:** A description of how the project is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal/s. This should include a description of the project's direct and indirect beneficiaries as well as a plan on how to continue the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable. The proposed timeline for the project activities should include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events. Applicants may also submit proposed workshop or training agendas and materials.
 6. **Project Timeline: A timeline of your project activities.**
 7. **Beneficiaries:** An estimated number of direct and indirect beneficiaries of your proposed project.
 8. **Local Project Partners:** A list of partners who will support the proposed project, if applicable.
 9. **Communication Plan:** The communication plan should include a communication and outreach strategy for promoting the proposed project. It may include social media, websites, print news, or other forms of media intended to use to share information about the project to beneficiaries and the public. Communications should include AEIF 2024, Exchange Alumni, and U.S. Embassy branding.
 10. **Project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** The Monitoring and Evaluation component of the proposal should outline in detail how the proposal's activities will advance the program's goals and objectives. This should include any outcomes showing a change in knowledge, awareness, and attitudes; improved quality of services; increased capacity at a school, group; etc. Proposals should also include how the grantee will measure the impact of planned activities.
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3. **2024 Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund Budget Form with Budget Narrative:**

Applicants must submit a detailed budget and budget narrative justification utilizing the template provided. Line-item expenditures should be listed in the greatest possible detail. Budgets shall be submitted in U.S. dollars and final grant agreements will be conducted in U.S. dollars.

4. Attachments:

- Official permission letters, if required for program activities
- Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

AEIF 2024 does not support the following activities or costs, and the selection committee will deem applications involving any of these activities or costs ineligible:

- Any airfare to/from the United States and its territories
- Activities that take place in the United States and its territories
- Staff salaries, office space, and overhead/operational expenses
- Large items of durable equipment or construction programs
- Alcohol, excessive meals, refreshments, or entertainment
- Academic or scientific research
- Charitable or development activities
- Provision of direct social services to a population
- Individual scholarships
- Social travel/visits
- Gifts or prizes
- Duplication of existing programs
- Institutional development of an organization
- Venture capital, for-profit endeavors, or charging a fee for participation in project
- Support for specific religious activities
- Fund-raising campaigns
- Support or opposition of partisan political activity or lobbying for specific legislation

APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

Criteria:

Each application will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined below.

Relevance to Application Theme

The proposal provides sufficient information on how the activities will support the theme(s) of the competition. The narrative explains any relevant local context the D.C. Selection Committee may not be aware of in relation to this project. Proposed project ideas must be public diplomacy in nature (i.e. not development or military).

Purpose and Summary, Description, and Implementation Plan

When developing the purpose, summary, description, and implementation plan, applicants should aim to make all descriptions clear, concise, and compelling. Reviewers will judge the proposals based on the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the community where it is undertaken. Does the project address an important gap of understanding or need? If the aim of the project is achieved, how will existing knowledge or practice be improved? What audience do the applicants hope to reach with this project? How many will participate? How will they be selected?

Degree of Alumni Involvement

Projects must include the involvement of at least two (2) exchange alumni. They may be the project team leaders or collaborate directly with PAS in formulating the project. More than two alumni may comprise the team, however, the minimum is two. As the team leaders, the alumni must be closely involved in project planning, implementation, etc. Applicants should ensure that the proposal includes the following information for each alumni team member: first name, last name, e-mail address, exchange program, country of citizenship, and roles and responsibilities.

Participation and Support from Local Partners

The proposal demonstrates buy-in and support from the community where the project will take place. Local partner involvement is a strong sign that there is community support and that the project will engage a broad array of experts, such as subject matter experts, community centers, academic institutions, businesses, local/national government, non-governmental organizations, American Spaces, etc.

Evaluation and Impact of the Project

A monitoring & evaluation (M&E) plan is pivotal to project implementation and important tracking progress towards the project's objectives and goals. An M&E plan should consider the data needed to effectively monitor progress toward specific outputs and outcomes as well as how that data collection will be accomplished. Well-crafted indicators should be used to understand a program's progress toward the desired results. An M&E plan should be reviewed for the following:

- Completion
- Applicability and logic of objectives and indicators
- Clear approach to monitoring
- Adherence to SMART criteria
- Feasibility of baselines and targets
- Data quality plan
- Capacity to implement plan

Communication, Media, and Outreach Plan

The project should include a clear plan and timeline for how and when the team will share information about the project. It is important to ensure that the U.S. Embassy gets recognition throughout the process, if circumstances permit.

Budget and Budget Narrative

The budget and narrative justification are sufficiently detailed. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The budget is realistic, accounting for all necessary expenses to achieve proposed activities. The results and proposed outcomes justify the total cost of the project. Budget items are reasonable, allowable, and allocable.

Review and Selection Process

The U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Sections will use the criteria outlined above to evaluate all applications.

OTHER INFORMATION

Guidelines for Budget Justification

Please refer back to Funding Restrictions in section D for costs not supported through the 2024 AEIF.

Venue Costs: Calculate costs for renting space for project-related activities such as workshops or other training activities. Consider looking for donated space first. If donated space is not possible, costs should be reasonable based on the local environment. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Promotional Items and Advertising: These items aim to amplify your project. All requests should be reasonable and relevant to the project. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Meals and Beverage: Include reasonable costs for snacks, non-alcoholic beverages, and meals if essential to the project. Break down meals by the cost per person per meal.

All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Speaker/Consultant/Training Fees: Speaker: Maximum of \$250 per day for full programming.

Trainer: Maximum of \$250 per day or \$25 per hour. Consider asking fellow Alumni with expertise to cost-share speaker/training fees. Consultant: A reasonable consultant fee may be included by Alumni for project management and oversight. However, consider cost-sharing as the AEIF cannot provide salary type expenses. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Lodging and Per Diem: List per diem rates and hotel costs which directly support the implementation of the project and indicate single or double occupancy. Per diem rates should be calculated according to the U.S. government allowable rates or be adjusted to local prices if appropriate. Please consult with your U.S. Embassy/Consulate. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Travel: If the program involves travel, include a brief statement of justification for that travel. Estimate the costs of travel for this project, consultants or speakers, and participants/beneficiaries. Costs can include in-country and intraregional air fare or local travel costs required for the actual implementation of the project. Travel between the U.S. and project country is not supported. The AEIF does not support travel in business class or higher. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Supplies, Materials, Equipment: Include general office supplies, computer software, consumable automotive supplies (i.e. fuel), small equipment such as laptops, projector, etc.,

and expendable materials (i.e. paper, paint). Rent equipment rather than purchase if it is more cost-efficient. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

Other: Describe other costs directly associated with the program, which do not fit in the other categories. Commonly cited items are administrative and accounting costs, shipping costs for materials and equipment, and monitoring and evaluation. All expenses must be itemized and explained.

“Cost Sharing” refers to contributions from the organization or other entities other than the U.S. Embassy. It also includes in-kind contributions such as volunteers’ time and donated venues.

Alcoholic Beverages: Please note that award funds cannot be used for alcoholic beverages.